

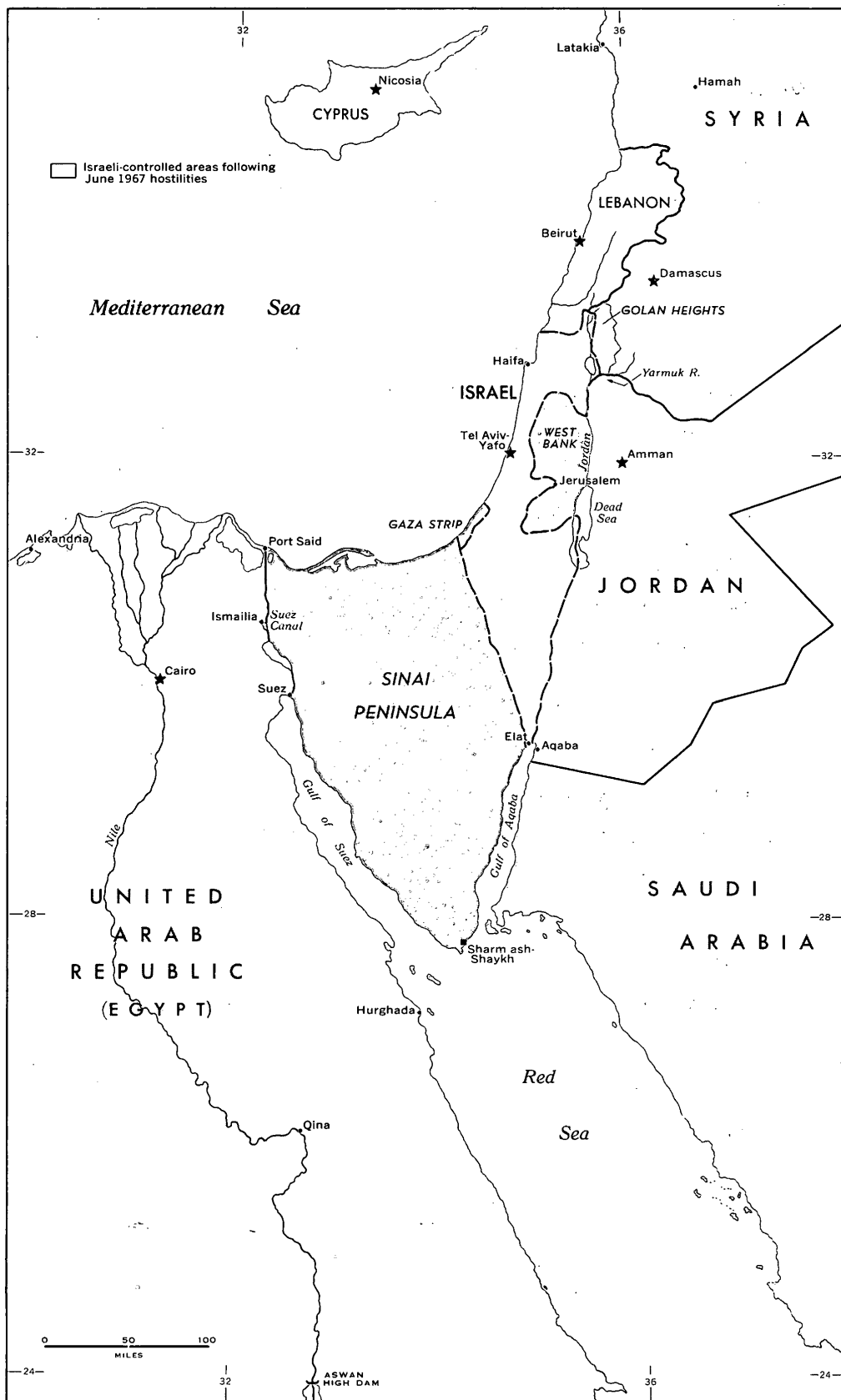
The President's Daily Brief

7 March 1969

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TOP SECRET

LATE NOTES FOR THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF OF

7 MARCH 1969



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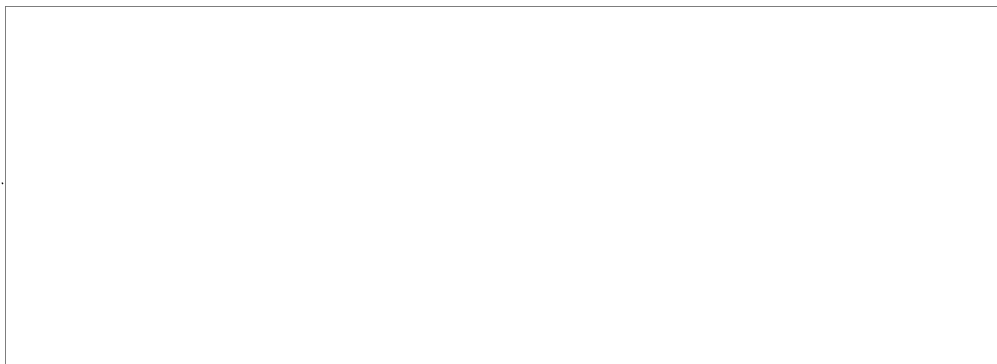
TOP SECRET

8 March 1969

LATE NOTES FOR THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF OF
7 MARCH 1969


I. MAJOR PROBLEMS

MIDDLE EAST



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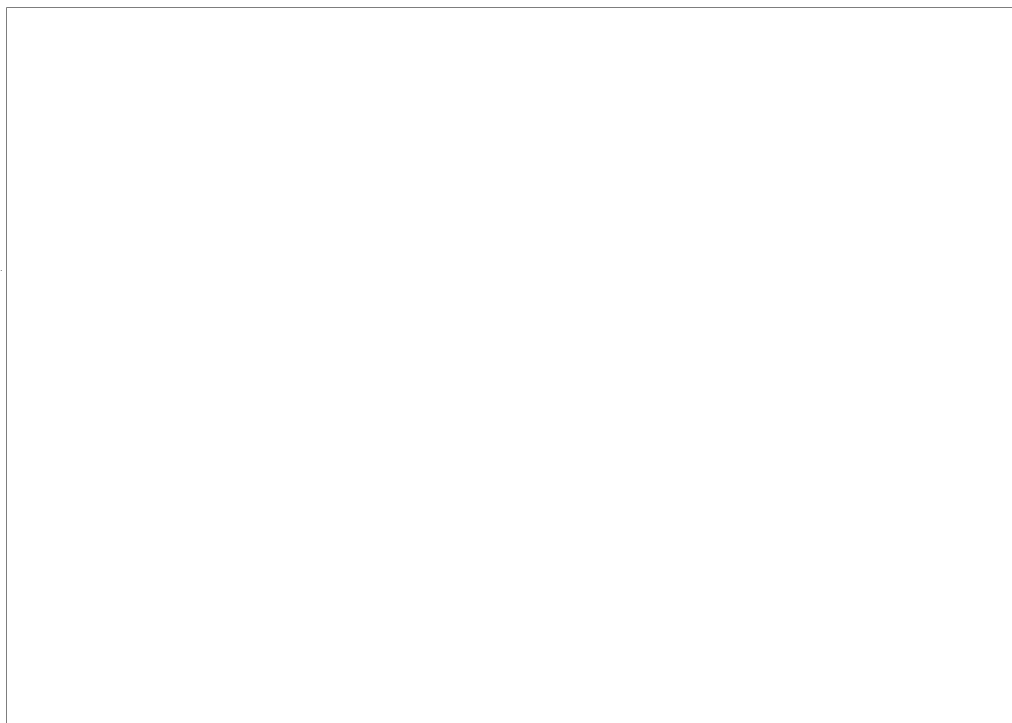
* * *

Tel Aviv announced today that four Egyptian MIGs overflowed the Sinai Peninsula this morning and that one of them had been shot down. 

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EUROPE

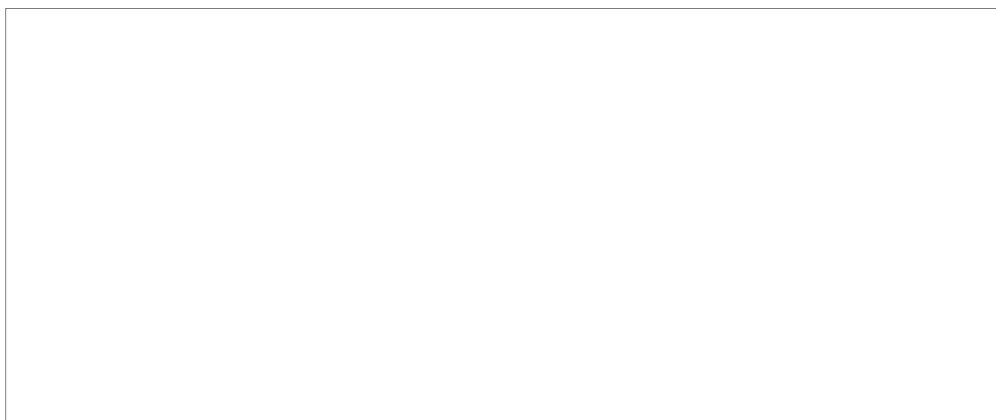
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SOVIET AFFAIRS

There is nothing significant to report.

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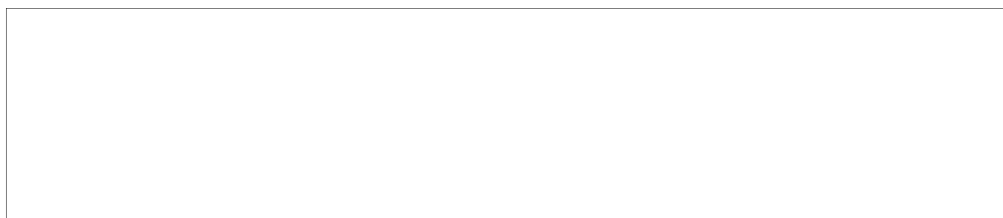
VIETNAM

Communist forces attacked US positions in Tay Ninh and Binh Long provinces north and northwest of Saigon during the night of 7-8 March.

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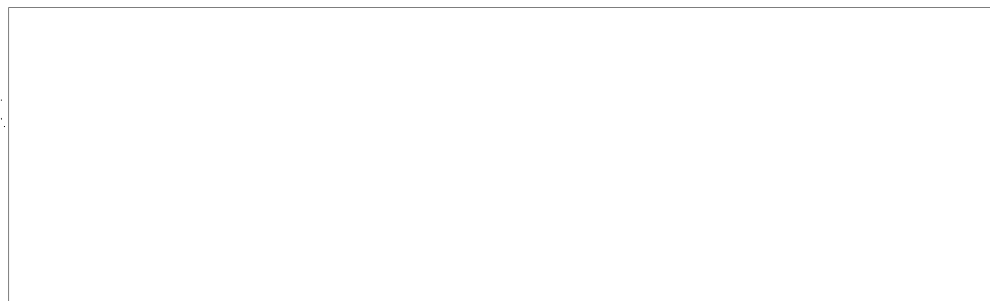
Indications of impending Communist action in other areas continue to accumulate.



II. OTHER IMPORTANT DEVELOPMENTS

SOVIET UNION - COMMUNIST CHINA

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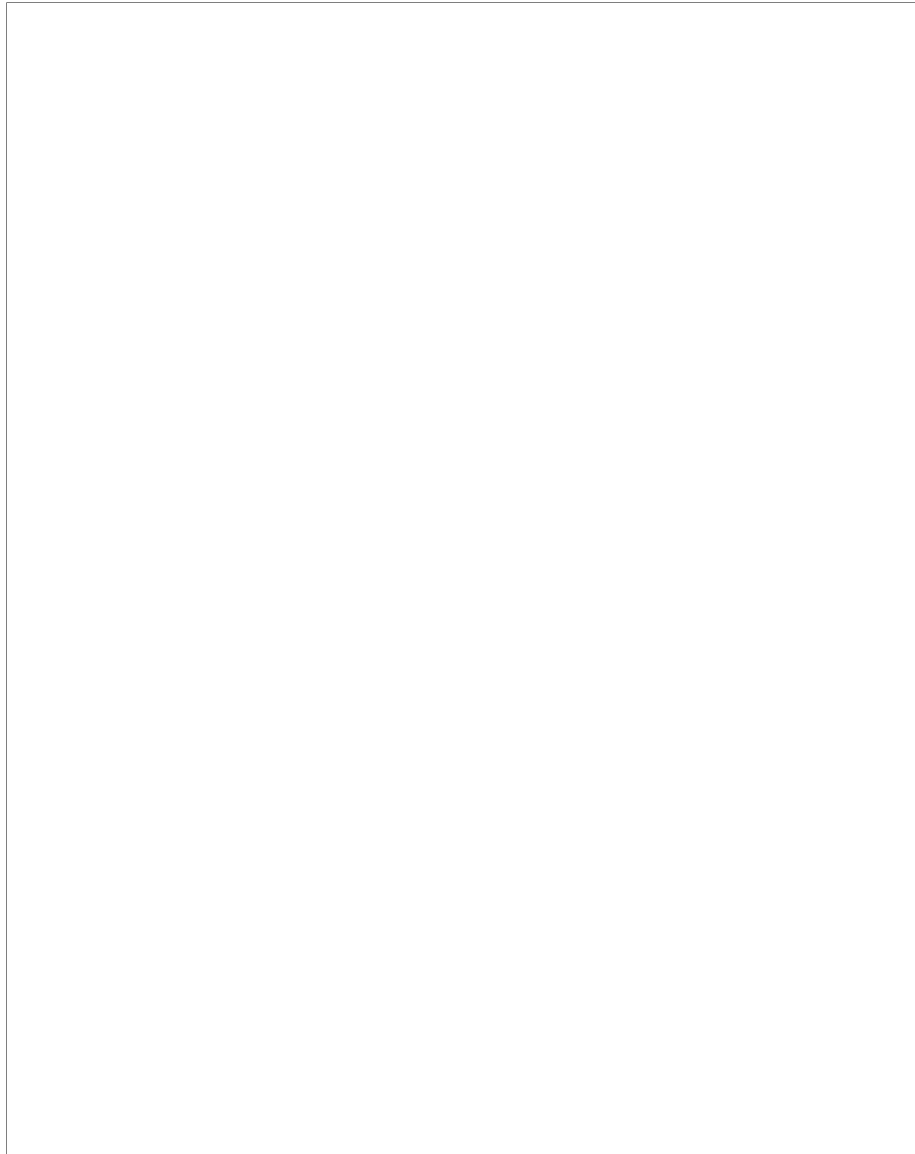
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I. MAJOR PROBLEMS

MIDDLE EAST

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* * *

The police chief in Jerusalem told the press Wednesday that the Israelis have rounded up about 80 suspected

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terrorists. All of them, he said, are residents of Israeli-occupied territory, including Gaza and Jerusalem. He also showed the reporters enough munitions "to blow up half of Jerusalem."

When the Israelis uncover a ring such as this, the main sufferers usually are the relatives of those arrested. The press indicates that Israeli authorities have in fact begun the destruction of the suspects' houses.

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EUROPE

Kurt Birrenbach, the highly respected leader of West German public opinion, sought out Chargé Fessenden Thursday to reiterate his belief that there is no alternative for Europe other than integration and that President de Gaulle's views are anathema to European unity. He fears that even French policy toward the Middle East is really designed to further the general's European theories by building up France as the spokesman for continental Europe among "the big four."

SOVIET AFFAIRS

Most of the Soviet troops deployed west of Berlin have returned to their garrisons. These moves caused a further

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closing of the Berlin-Helmstedt autobahn for three hours today. When an American officer protested to the Soviet checkpoint commander, the latter commented that the autobahn "will not be closed long. Over-all it won't be going on much longer."

VIETNAM

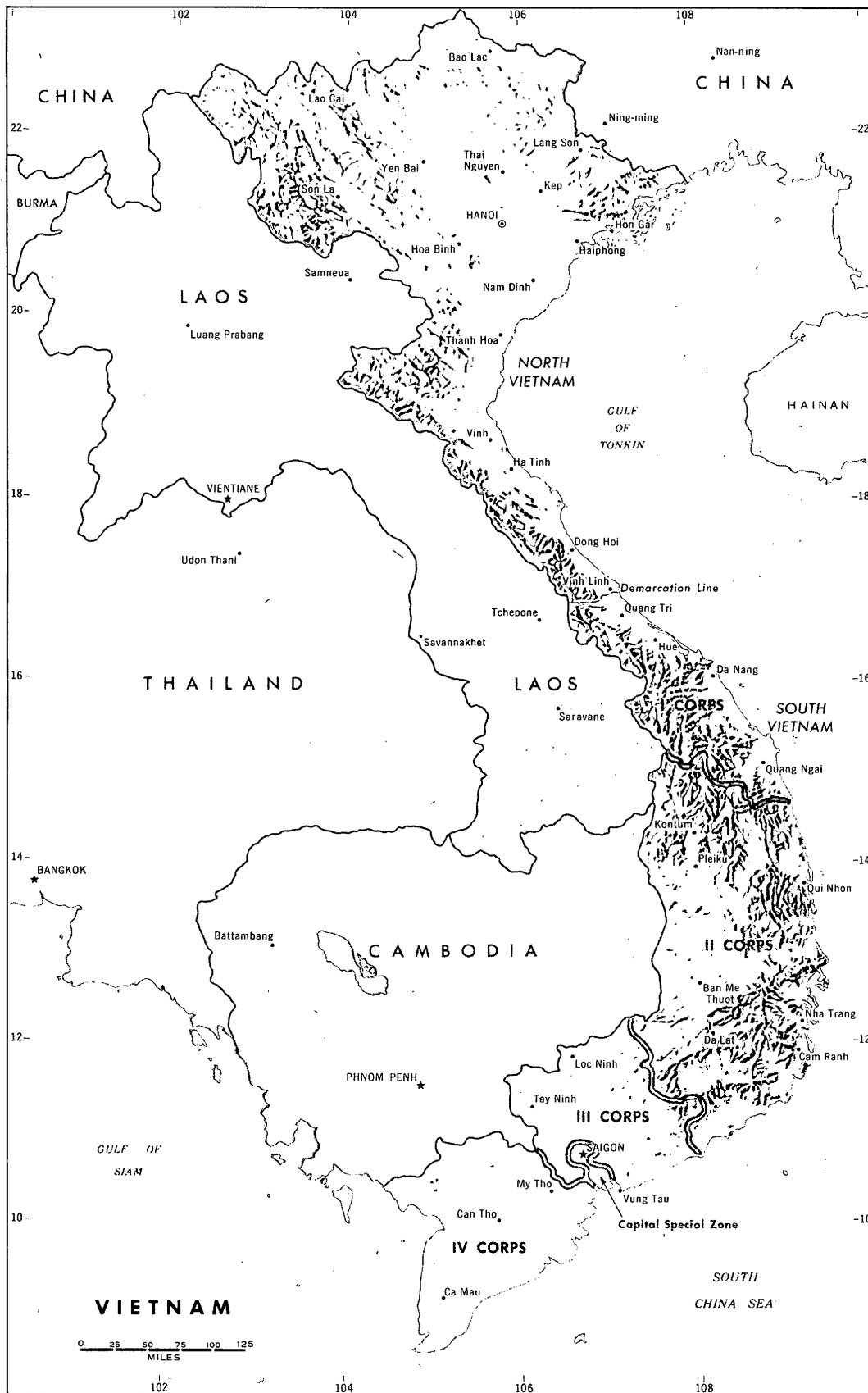
President Thieu's reflections on Communist intentions in his conversation with Ambassador Bunker on 6 March seem both realistic and persuasive. In particular, we agree with his suggestion that the Communists may be trying to erode the basis of the "understanding" on the bombing halt in the hope of some further horse-trading which might curb US military operations in South Vietnam.

It would be a crude maneuver for the Communists to attempt to trade off a cessation of attacks on cities for a halt to some specific US military actions, such as B-52 raids. Nonetheless, this may well be the direction in which they are heading. The Front's press spokesman in Paris came close to making this point yesterday when he said, in response to questions about Communist shellings and terrorist attacks, that "no agreement was reached with the US to end the war."

* * *

A North Vietnamese spokesman in Paris addressed himself today to the possibility of retaliatory air strikes against North Vietnam. He told the press that the Communists

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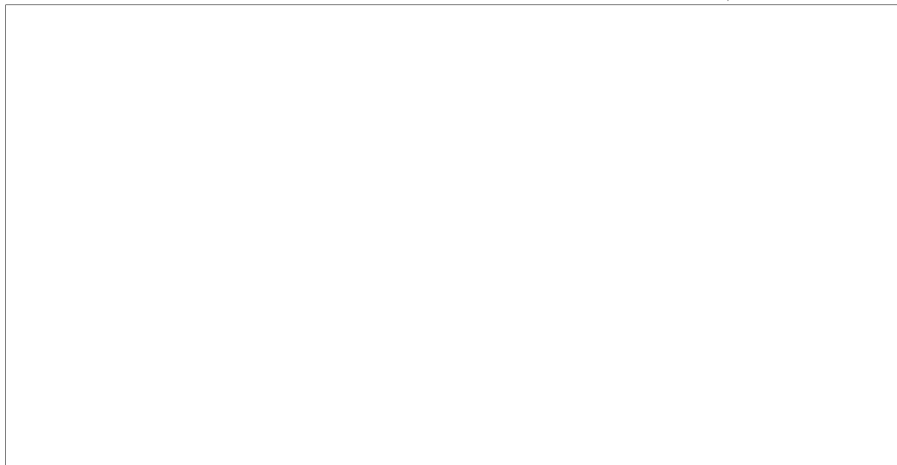
will continue their attacks in South Vietnam and asserted defiantly that North Vietnam was not intimidated by the threat of US bombings.

The Communists probably calculated before they started the current offensive round that any losses they might suffer as a result of US retaliatory strikes would be more than offset by the additional pressures this course would put on the over-all US position. In fact, given their public position the Communists would be hard put not to continue the shellings of major cities in South Vietnam in the face of US retaliatory action. Furthermore, the Communists may want to confront the US with the dilemma of retaliating in a major way and taking the adverse political pressures engendered by a "US escalation," or of not retaliating and thus exacerbating tensions between Saigon and Washington.

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Numerous indicators point to a substantial rise in Communist military activity possibly beginning this weekend, particularly in III Corps and IV Corps. During the past 24 hours, however, action in South Vietnam was at about the same level as the last few days.



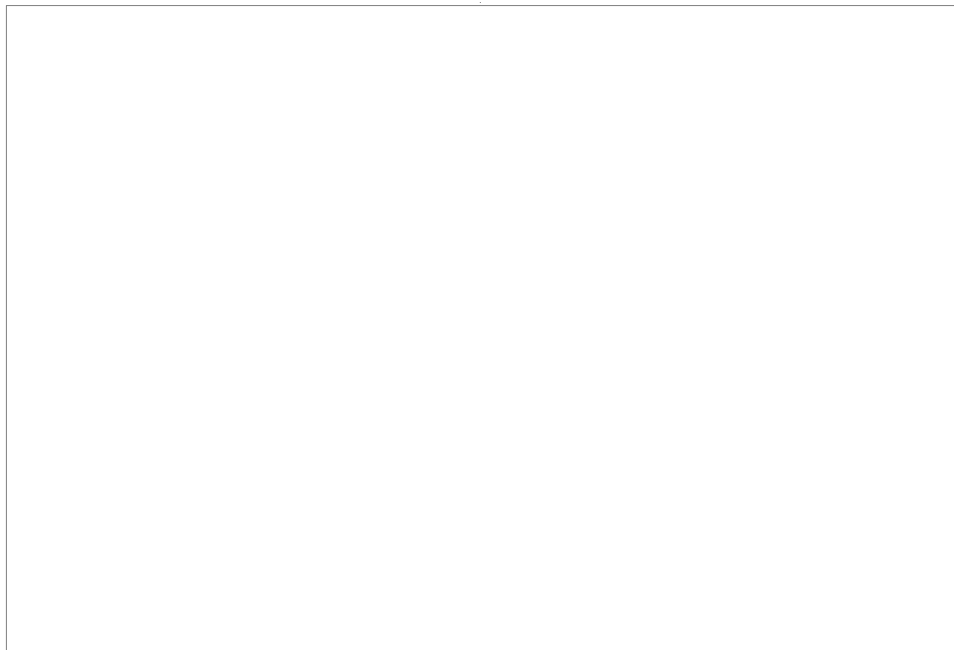
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II. OTHER IMPORTANT DEVELOPMENTS

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JAPAN

Over the past year, pressure has been building for sterner government action against leftist disorders at the universities. Many government leaders apparently are now convinced of the need for this. There has been a recent upsurge in student violence in Kyoto, and Liberal Democratic Party members have taken political soundings which indicate widespread popular discontent with student excesses. Prime Minister Sato himself has probably concluded that if he does not soon respond, intraparty rivals may use the issue to attack his leadership.

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The introduction of legislation to curb student violence probably would meet with bitter opposition from ultraleftist Socialists and Communists and might even lead to an impasse in Diet proceedings. Under these circumstances, Sato might consider it politically opportune to dissolve the Diet within the next few months and call for general elections. Such a decision would be based on his assessment that the opposition Japan Socialist Party is generally unprepared for early elections, and that the government's sponsorship of an emergency bill to restore order in the schools would be an effective campaign issue having wide popular appeal.

SOVIET UNION - COMMUNIST CHINA

However the Soviet-Chinese border incident began, both sides are now committed to treating it as a deliberate provocation by the other. Although Chinese harassment of the Soviets in Peking has eased, massive anti-Soviet patriotic rallies are continuing throughout the country. The Chinese are not likely to give the Russians the last word. Peking apparently hopes to capitalize heavily on the incident to reinforce recent propaganda appeals for a renewed display of national unity on the eve of the crucial Ninth Party Congress, now expected this month.

There have, however, been no indications that either side has significantly altered its military posture in

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the area.

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COMMUNIST CHINA

The Annex today discusses Communist China's strategic weapons program.

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COMMUNIST CHINA'S STRATEGIC WEAPONS PROGRAM

A National Intelligence Estimate has just been completed on Communist China's strategic weapons program. It concludes that the program continues to be given a high priority despite recent economic and political difficulties. The Chinese may now have a limited regional nuclear strike capability consisting of a few thermonuclear weapons for delivery by their two operational jet medium bombers. They may also have some fission weapons in stock.

Medium-range ballistic missile deployment could begin this year or more likely in 1970, reaching a force of some 80-100 launchers in the mid-1970s. If the Chinese achieve an operational ICBM by the earliest possible date--late 1972--they might have something on the order of 10 to 25 deployed ICBMs by 1975. However, it is more likely that initial operational capability will be reached later than 1972, perhaps by as much as two or three years. If so, the deployment of a force of this size would slip accordingly.

Many uncertainties leave in doubt the future pace, size, and scope of the Chinese program. China lacks the broad technical and economic resources to forge ahead as rapidly as did the US or the USSR, and this situation has been aggravated by the domestic dislocations caused by the Cultural Revolution. In general the Chinese programs have not advanced as fast as we once thought likely. However, if Peking allocates its resources and chooses priorities carefully, it can continue to make gradual progress in developing strategic missiles and nuclear weapons.

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The Chinese effort to develop strategic weapons goes back to at least 1957-58. The original program was started with Soviet assistance and appeared to be extremely ambitious. The cessation of Soviet aid in 1960 and the confusion and depression of the early 1960s resulting from the "Great Leap Forward" had a severe impact on the advanced weapons program. Nevertheless, Peking persisted in giving high priority to the development of advanced weapons and gradual progress was made. The program continued to receive a high priority throughout the Cultural Revolution. By 1966 the Chinese already had many of the facilities necessary to support an ongoing advanced weapons program.

The political disorder of the Cultural Revolution has been disruptive, however. Its ultimate cost will depend, of course, on the time it takes to re-establish political and administrative order. Even with a restoration of order, the Chinese economy can support a large-scale production and deployment of strategic weapons only by neglecting the investment requirements for healthy growth in agriculture and in the general industrial sector. This and other uncertainties suggest caution in estimating the probable rate of progress of China's advanced weapons development over the next few years.

Medium-range Missiles

it appeared that MRBM deployment might be imminent. Though detailed information was lacking, it

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was known that the Chinese had been working on an MRBM

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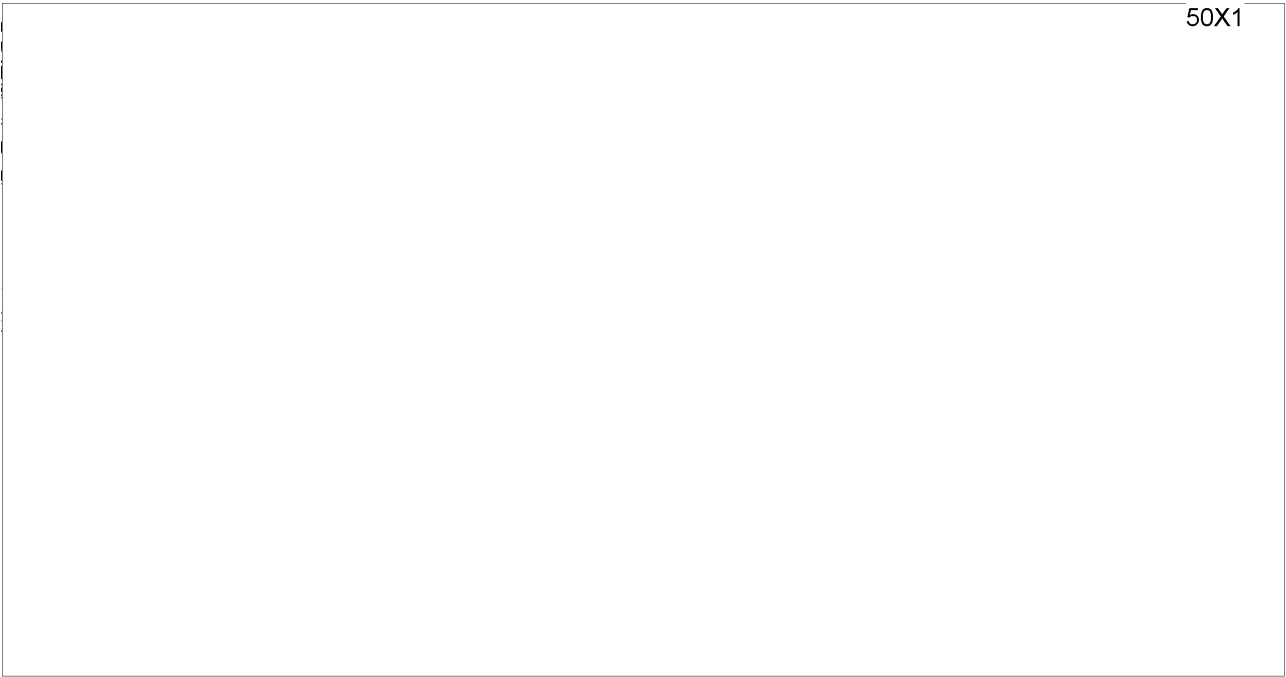
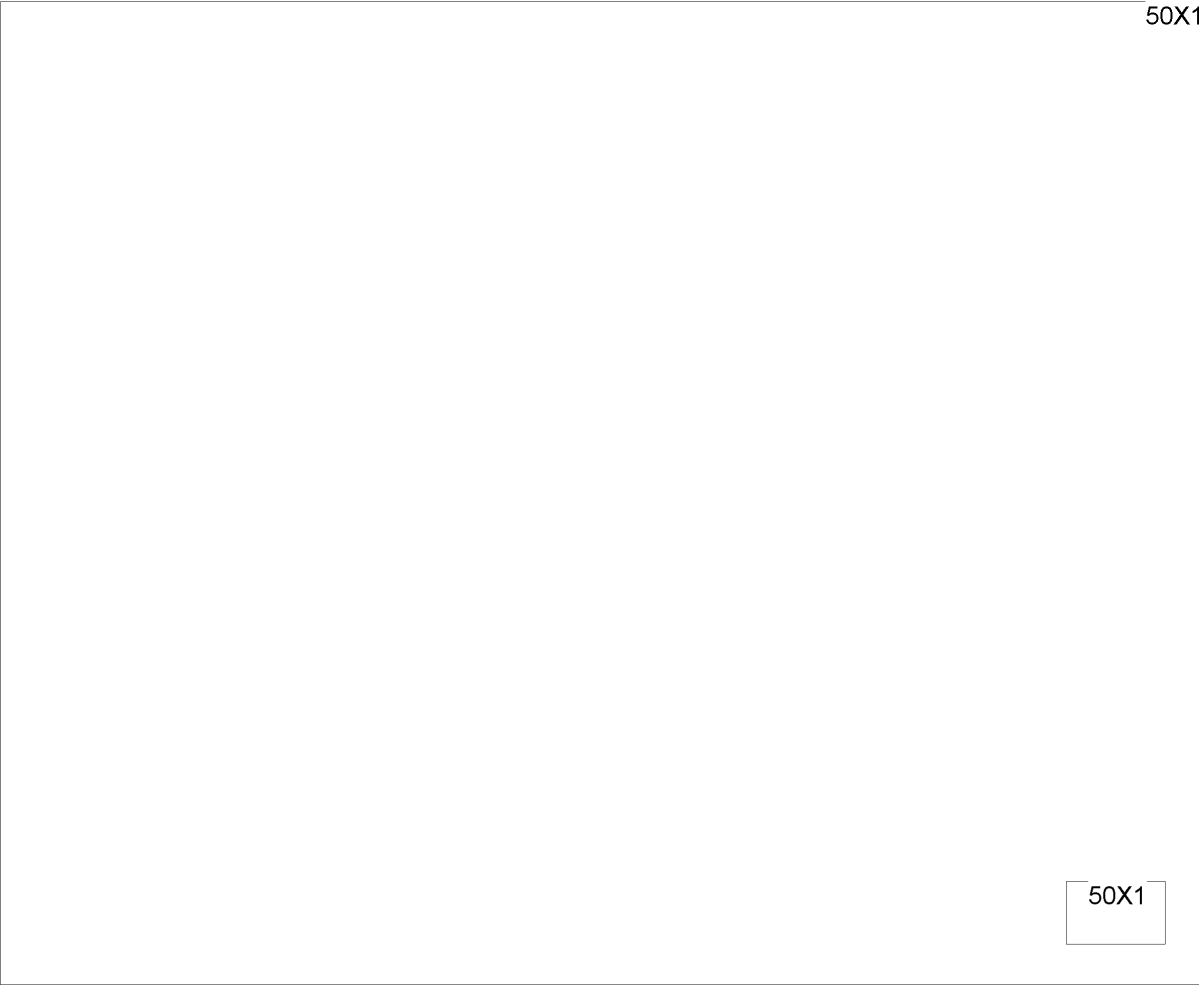
It is not possible to explain the apparent delay in deployment with much confidence. Technical problems with the missile and disruptions of the Cultural Revolution may have slowed progress. It could be that priorities assigned to the development of nuclear weapons are influencing the deployment schedule or that the immediate purpose of the MRBM program was to develop technology for an ICBM.

It remains possible that the MRBM system is now ready to deploy. If so, the Chinese probably could soon do so, putting MRBMs in rudimentary field launch positions at the cost of reduced reliability and accuracy. More likely Peking will take time to prepare permanent sites with adequate support facilities. It would probably take the Chinese a year or more to prepare their first permanent launch facilities. If preparation should begin soon, it would still be sometime in 1970 before the Chinese had an operational MRBM capability.

We have no good basis for estimating the size of the MRBM force that might be deployed, but the Chinese probably would want to cover important military bases and population centers in the arc stretching from Japan through Southeast Asia and northern India. They would probably also target some MRBMs against the USSR. For these purposes the Chinese might require a force of 80-100 MRBMs. If begun in 1970, such a program could extend into the mid-1970s.

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Intercontinental Missiles

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Assuming that test vehicles were available, ICBM flight testing might begin this year. It should be pointed out, however, that in Chinese programs there have been long lapses between the completion of a facility and its effective use.

From whatever time the Chinese begin testing an ICBM, it is likely to require at least three years to achieve an initial operational capability. Thus if flight testing were to begin later this year, the earliest possible date would probably be late 1972. However, this allows the Chinese only a bit more time than required by the Soviets or the US with first generation ICBMs and assumes fairly smooth progress. In the light of China's inexperience

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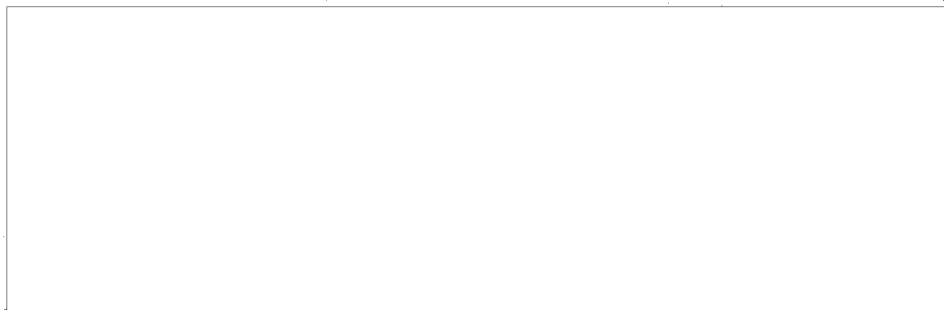
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and limited technical and scientific base, and considering general political and economic conditions in China, more time will probably be required. Thus, the initial operational capability is more likely to be later than 1972, perhaps by as much as two or three years.

Bomber Aircraft

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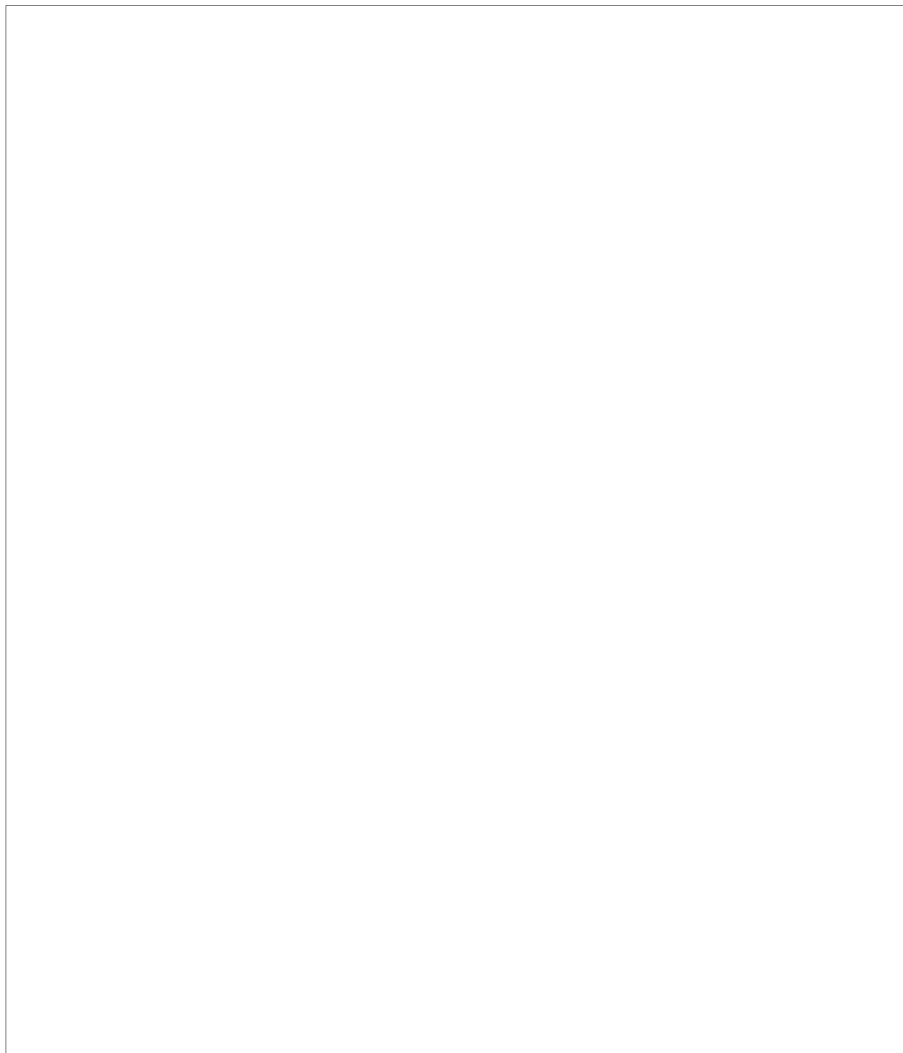
As with MRBMs, there is no good basis for estimating the number of TU-16s the Chinese will deploy. We estimate that production could reach a rate of four or five aircraft a month in about two years. Because of testing requirements and initial production problems, however, only a few of these aircraft are likely to be deployed in the next year or two. As the program proceeds, we should be able to determine production and deployment rates with fairly good confidence.

Space Program

We believe that for reasons of national prestige the Chinese will try to orbit a satellite as soon as possible. They probably will use a modified MRBM for a space booster if they attempt to launch a satellite this year.

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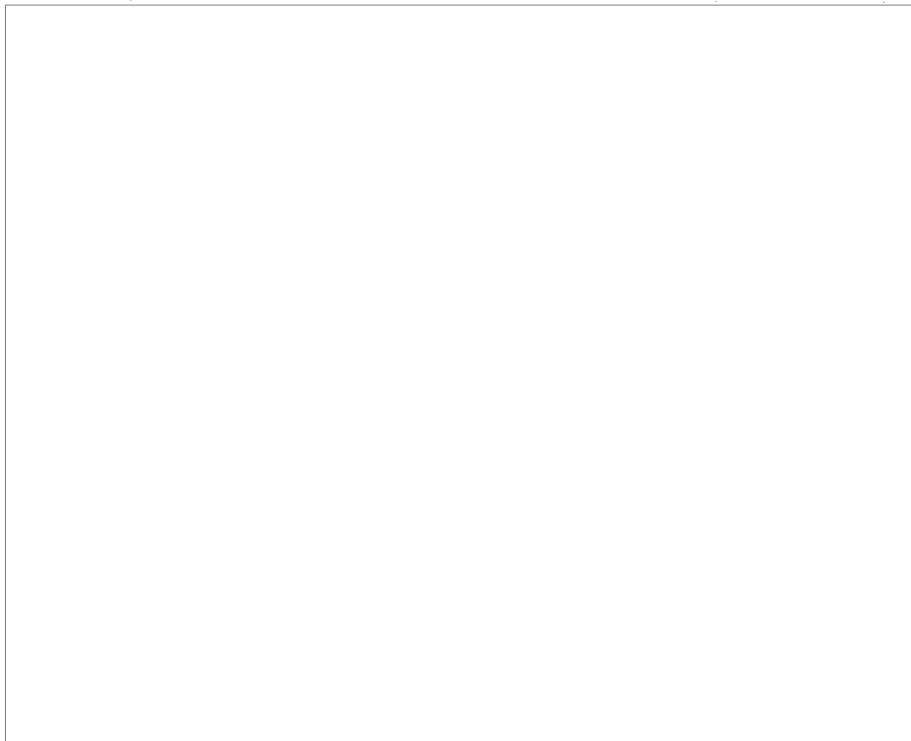
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Development of Nuclear Weapons

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Peking's greatest achievements have probably been in the field of nuclear weapon design, where it has rapidly succeeded in developing a high-yield thermonuclear device



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